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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



EULOGY

ON

GEN. ZACHARY TAYLOR.

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

DELIVERED OCTOBER 2, 1850,

BY THE

HON. JOSEPH R. INGERSOLL.

PHILADELPHIA:

CRISSY & MARKLEY, PRINTERS, NO. 4 MINOR STREET.

1850.



City Hall, July 17. 1850.

WEDNESDAY EVENING.

DEAR SIR:—

We beg leave to hand you, enclosed, the copy of a Resolution of the Committee of Arrangement, appointed by the Select and Common Councils, to do honors to the memory of the late illustrious and lamented President, Zachary Taylor; and, in expressing the hope, that you will find it convenient to yourself to yield to the request of the Committee, we are sure, that we only anticipate the most ardent wishes of our entire community.

With sincere assurances of our personal regard,

We are, very respectfully,

Your friends and obedient servants,

ISAAC ELLIOTT,

ALBERT G. WATERMAN,

J. PRICE WETHERILL.

HON. J. R. INGERSOLL.

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**Committee Room, City Hall.**

*“Resolved, That the Sub-committee be authorized to wait on the Hon. Joseph R. Ingersoll, and invite him to deliver an Eulogium on the memory of the late President, Zachary Taylor, at a time to be designated by himself.”*

Extract from the minutes.—July 16, 1850.

EDMUND WILCOX,

*Secretary to the Committee of Arrangements.*

South Fourth Street, July 20, 1850.

GENTLEMEN:—

I am fully sensible of my inability to delineate justly the character of "the late illustrious and lamented President." Yet a sense of duty, and of respect for yourselves and the distinguished bodies of which you are the representatives, will ~~not~~ allow me to decline the invitation with which you are pleased to honor me. I will hope, in obedience to the wishes so kindly communicated by you, to deliver "an Eulogium," at a time that may be mutually agreeable.

Believe me to be,

Most truly and respectfully yours,

J. R. INGERSOLL.

ISAAC ELLIOTT,

ALBERT G. WATERMAN,

JOHN PRICE WETHERILL, Esq's.,

*Committee of Arrangements.*

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#### Committee Room, Councils,

PHILADELPHIA, OCTOBER 8, 1850.

"Committee on Seminaries;" *dec. appointed by Councils, July 10, 1850.*

#### SPECIAL MEETING.

"On motion, it was *Resolved*, That the thanks of this Committee be, and they are hereby presented to the Honorable Joseph R. Ingersoll, for his most able and eloquent Eulogium, pronounced on Wednesday Evening, October 24, 1850, upon the life and public services of General Zachary Taylor, deceased, late President of the United States; and that he be respectfully requested to allow this Committee the use of the manuscript, for the purpose of having the same published in pamphlet form."

EDMUND WILCOX,

*Secretary to the Committee of Arrangements.*

## EULOGY.

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IF it be true that no man can be deemed happy before his death, we shall the more willingly unite in paying to the late president this tribute of affection and respect. His life was a career of glory, and he died full of honors. Yet a manly sorrow is not forbidden by the reflection, that the legacy which he has left to the country of an unspotted and illustrious name, is at once the cause of lasting consolation and just pride. The hopes of a great people have been suddenly blighted and turned to grief. Millions who hailed the auspicious election of the man of their choice, bow down in sad submission to the decree that his chief magistracy shall be no longer. Even they who, in the fair exercise of a constitutional right, withheld from him their suffrages, partake of the mourning for a general loss. Funeral solemnities have been performed in many cities. They have pronounced,

as it were, sentence of approving judgment on departed worth. As marks of public respect, ceremonies of this character have been resorted to in greater or less degree of display and pomp, from the remotest ages, long before immortality was brought to light, and when thick darkness rested upon our destiny in the great hereafter. They continue to be used as proofs of becoming sorrow, and as pledges that surviving friends, and grateful and admiring countrymen, will bear in cherished recollection the examples of those whose counsels, however wise, can no more be uttered ; and whose energies, however commanding, have ceased for ever. They are in principle not unlike those tribunals we read of, which were invested with jurisdiction over the whole conduct of life, and held their solemn sittings after its close. A difference in favor of the honors which we pay, consists in their being voluntary effusions of feeling, flowing in unprompted purity from the heart. These are pious offerings of posthumous esteem. They are like evening dews, which, having ascended from the grateful earth, shed their gentle and refreshing influence after the light has ceased to shine.

“Such honors Ilion to her hero paid,  
And peaceful slept the mighty Hector’s shade.”

It is almost peculiar to our country that while in the tumult of political strife, invective and seemingly bitter resentments prevail, the resentments are assuaged, and the expression of them is hushed by the sanctity of death. The press, so active and so critical, returns to its quiver the envenomed arrow prepared for flight, and sheathes the sword sharpened for assault. Blessed would be the sorrow that should keep them there! Rival politicians in the national legislature vie with each other in terms of eulogy. State legislatures, ordinarily opposed in political sentiment, unanimously adopt resolutions of fervent praise. Justice, which may have been withheld from living merit, is freely offered, when the voice of honor and the voice of shame are alike unable to "provoke the silent dust," or "soothe the dull cold ear of death."

An ordeal so severe stands in the way to eminence, that merit only can be expected to reach the dignity and influence, it is supposed to confer. Rare must be the occasion, when its pretensions, having stood the proof, are not entitled to the praise. "The call to that high place," said Mr. Madison, in his inaugural discourse, "is a distinguished mark of confidence proceeding from the deliberate and tranquil suffrages of a free and virtuous nation." All those who have been so distinguished, have been more than scrutinized in their approach to power, and when that power has

been laid aside, they have not failed in the hearts and minds of their earliest posterity to be identified with the name and fame of the republic. It is matter of historic pride that the eleven Presidents who, since the formation of the constitution, have, by deliberate suffrage, been called to that high place, were all remarkable for their private virtues and devoted love of country. It is scarcely possible here that an Aurelius should be succeeded by a Commodus. Accordingly the qualities of all of them have been without a taint of selfishness or inordinate ambition, from the sublime virtues of the first, whom foreign observers have placed in the foremost rank of all mankind, to the quiet heroism of the last, whose official records of his own achievements have, on like authority, been received as models of simplicity, brevity, and modesty. To both, have these mournful rites especially been paid, with a plainness derived from the character of the institutions of which one of them was a founder, and each of them was officially and personally a zealous supporter; and with a sincerity that was due to the chosen objects of honor and renown. They will go down the course of years together. Future generations will confirm the opinion of the present, and time, when it shall have dispersed the clouds of error and prejudice, if they now prevail, and tested the soundness of existing judgment, and even obscured the events themselves, which

may have been too faintly delineated, will gild the recollection of the homage that has been done, and the names it illustrates.

If the political children of the fathers of our country have, like the children of the patriarchs of old, the sons of Abraham and the sons of Isaac, differed in their parents' lives, they have, like those children of the patriarchs, "mingled tears over their parents' tomb," and "their angry passions sleep in dust."

Impartial posterity sometimes speedily sets aside the hastily-formed opinion of the day, sometimes more remotely. It seldom fails to develope, in the end, a genuine sentiment, though for a season it may have been obscured or perverted. It is one advantage in the too open course of the government policy of our country, and of those who carry out its designs, that there is little danger that either should be greatly misinterpreted. Ages have not always sufficed elsewhere to fix a judgment upon a ruler, and he has been applauded or condemned with a voice that has fluctuated for centuries. We are told of the superb funeral of Cromwell. It was more than regal. His waxen effigy, lying in royal robes upon a velvet bed of state, with crown and globe and sceptre, like a king, was borne by his own lords under a pall of velvet and fine linen. Pendants and *guidons* were carried by officers of the army. Imperial banners and *achievements* by

heralds in their coats. A richly-caparisoned horse, embroidered all over with gold; a knight of honor, armed *cap-a-pie*; and after all his guards, soldiers, and innumerable mourners. In less than two short years, we are also told, this royal effigy was hung with a rope round its neck from the bars of a window at Whitehall.

The last hours of our lamented President form a contrast with those of the great Protector not less striking than his obsequies. Some great men have looked to the dread event which all must meet with indifference; some with unmanly fear; some with desire. Death, we read, was terrible to Cicero, delightful to Cato, indifferent to Socrates. It was the becoming and peculiar part of General Taylor to die as he had lived, in the unaffected performance of a duty. The fatal messenger found him not unprepared, and witnessed, it may be said, the modest, simple, brief farewell to time and all things human, uttered not in sullen acquiescence, proud defiance, or unworthy boasting, but in humble trust that he had endeavored to do his duty. Whether the dying patriot, always conscious that his own merits were of no reliance beyond the grave, and looking back to a busy intercourse with men—intended to convey to those about him a paternal lesson, in his own example, or repeated to himself the secret whispering of a loyal bosom, or

devoutly offered up his soul in all humility to its eternal Judge, claiming no loftier praise than an endeavor to do his duty—it was in every shape the ruling principle of all his actions. Never was a master passion more amiably indulged. Never was an instinctive tendency, which discipline had matured into a governing rule, and habit had identified with the elements of a pure nature, more triumphantly vindicated. No ostentation sullied the patient utterance. No aim to elevate, no effort to disguise the motive or the character of actions, all of which were ended. The clay-cold lips were closed for ever, moistened with the last breath that uttered the characteristic words, “I have endeavored to do my duty.” It was not, as on like occasions is often perceived, the unconscious murmuring of a distempered fancy, bereft of reason and excited by fleeting phantoms of the past. It was the distinct perception and fervent utterance of a predominant and habitual thought, which, having gone with the daring spirit through many a danger, sustained, for a moment, the same spirit while sinking in the feebleness and the agony of dissolving nature, and then went with it, disembodied, up to heaven.

We, his countrymen, are endeavoring, in return, to pay a small part of the debt which is due to him, whose manly life was exposed, endangered, and devoted, for his country. Eulogy performs its fitting

office when it pours forth a nation's gratitude to the memory of public benefactors,—to the mighty dead, who have been high in station and in honor,—to those who, without a compromise of virtue, have, in the world's esteem, won the attribute of greatness. It was the chosen head of the government that, by a fatal and resistless blow, has been struck down in the midst of the people. A life which danger could not touch on the field of carnage, or the rude shock of armies overthrow in the fiercest conflict of battle, has obeyed a sterner summons, in seeming security, and guarded by the protecting wishes of many millions. A bereaved country submits, with resignation to the will of heaven, and adores the wisdom which permits the loss, and sanctifies the affliction. The grave has closed upon the mortal remains of a hero and a ruler, and the swelling heart speaks its willing praise of merit that is no longer cotemporary. The fragrance of the memory of departed excellence diffuses itself over the land, and its ripened fruits have become the common property of all.

It was the more than ordinary lot of the late president to have been successful and happy in all of his undertakings that are known. He ceased to conquer, so far as we are informed, only when he ceased to live. The world may have presented to him difficulties, as war presented dangers; but they were difficulties

and dangers, presented alike, to be overcome. No path was too steep to be ascended, or too rugged to be pursued. Even death was not without a serenity that has not often crowned so active a career. The muse of history, after inscribing on lasting tablets, for the instruction of mankind, the bold achievements of many a hero, is compelled to mourn over his closing hours that have dimmed their lustre. Not one of the Cæsars, according to some accounts, from the Dictator to Vespasian, died otherwise than by violence. The first of them, the brightest in the galaxy, fell a traitor by the daggers of the noblest men of Rome, when Brutus "shook his crimsoned steel." Another hero, no less illustrious, perished in the flower of his age, in the intoxication and voluptuousness of a royal feast, his blood-stained hand reeking from the murder of a friend. A third lived through all his battles, to become a melancholy wreck of dotage and helpless imbecility. A fourth, as it were but yesterday, fell from his towering height, and lingered through his latest years in hopeless captivity upon a barren rock. In the soft tints of mellowed light which fell upon the evening of that well spent day which we are contemplating, blessed, as it was, in the tenderest and dearest sympathies of domestic affection, nothing is presented to the recollection but the clear image of virtuous deeds,

and the bright example of a vigorous and unspotted life.

This is not the occasion for entering upon the province of history, which claims exclusive right to make narratives of events, and to record, in detail, the circumstances of the lives of eminent men. Our part is rather to develope striking points of character, and to show in what chiefly consisted the merits of one, whose virtues and position have made him illustrious. In displaying some of the excellencies of a lofty nature connected with marked efforts of conduct and action, it may be necessary to anticipate the biographer in looking to certain salient and characteristic incidents that call forth exalted qualities, and serve to illustrate them. Philosophy is to be extracted from fact; and scarcely a passing circumstance fails to point its moral if it be duly appreciated.

In the Spring of 1845, when the annexation of Texas had been authorized by Congress, an officer of rank in the military service of the United States was selected for a delicate and responsible command. But for that selection he might have continued to live in the respect and esteem of the government, and the comparatively few who knew him, or who had heard of an occasional effort that he had made of uncommon bravery in arms. Of all his countrymen he would have been later than

the last to disturb an habitual equanimity by any dreams of political ambition. As long as health and strength of mind and body should endure, his sober wishes would have looked forward in contentment to the performance of his arduous, but familiar, duty in the field; and, when its performance there should be made, even in distant prospect, doubtful, by the envious course of time, then to hang up his bruised arms, and retire to the retrospect of a well spent public life, and the possession of unwonted frugal rest. Moderate and tranquil as his expectations may have been, they were animated by the arrival of confidential instructions, free from all ambiguity, which found him at Fort Jessup, La., in the month of June. They required a forward movement of his troops forthwith. The immediate destination was the Gulf of Mexico, with an ultimate view to the western frontier of Texas, on or near the Rio Grande del Norte, to repel invasion and protect what, in the event of annexation, would be regarded as our western border. The instructions were, as the recipient of them promised they should be, closely obeyed. An onward movement was pursued, strictly under orders throughout, from post to post. Aransas Pass and Corpus Christi were soon reached; and thence, in due season, "the Army of Occupation of Texas, being now about to take a position upon the left bank of the Rio Grande, under the

orders of the executive of the United States,"\* the Colorado, Point Isabel, and the designated western border. During the course of these operations, not only was military skill in threatened marches critically exercised, but much personal discretion and political judgment were required in the conduct of so unusual an enterprise. A state of things existed that was neither peace nor war, truce nor strict neutrality. It called for the appearance and the reality of different attitudes in compliance with the emergencies of the moment. It was well described in an official paper from the secretary as "an equivocal state which had not the settled character of peace or war." Yet it was a state of which the equivocal character might, at the most unlooked for time, from the most unexpected cause, be deprived of its ambiguities, and made to unroll "the purple testament of bleeding war." As the individual who was invested with immediate control for all occasions, must exhibit in himself the modest stillness of the one condition, so must he bear within him an energy to rule in the whirlwind of the other. Acting always under the restraint of orders and committing no acts of positive hostility, he was gathering strength for the blow if it must be struck ;

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\* General Taylor's "Order No. 30, Head-Quarters Army of Occupation, Corpus Christi, March 8, 1846."

and he took a position that would defy the assaults of a probable enemy, against protests, proclamations, and menaces, and planted his artillery where its work could not fail to be effectual, on the very brink of war.\*

A crisis here presented itself in the fate of the future President. The liveliest curiosity was excited concerning his movements, and universal interest was felt in his behalf. During this interval of intense solicitude, his brief career of brilliant honors began to dawn. No accidental routine of service had pointed him out for the especial employment. "About four thousand men" were officially reported by the general-in-chief at Washington, "to compose the army of occupation under Brevet Brigadier-General Taylor, an officer of high merit." In the annual message to Congress of that year, the President announces, in relation to this well-considered selection, that "from his known character, and that of the general staff, commanders of

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\* President's Message, 11th May, 1846. "Instructions were issued on the 13th January, 1846, to the general in command of those troops to occupy the left bank of the Del Norte." The general replies, February 4,—“I shall lose no time in making preparations for carrying out these instructions.” “The army will go fully prepared for a state of hostilities should they be unfortunately provoked by Mexico.” April 6 he writes from the left bank of the Rio Grande,—“These guns bear directly upon the public square of Matamoros, and within good range for demolishing the town.”

corps, officers and men, there is no doubt the army of occupation will be more than sufficient for any defensive exigency likely to occur in that quarter." A better choice could scarcely have been made for a delicate and doubtful duty. The doubtfulness of it was judiciously sustained for a season without one hasty or needlessly offensive step, keeping in reserve the ability to conquer. Carefully to marshal all available means of conflict—fully to prepare for every contingency—firmly to assume an attitude to strike at the earliest needful opportunity, and to impart to a thus inevitable blow a vigor which would make it effectual—and yet, in appearance, to do nothing but move quietly into position; these were the governing rules of a settled yet diversified course of conduct. They were adopted as the means both of military success and territorial acquisition and guardianship. An observance of them was the engine of political advantage to the government, and unconsciously both to the government and its officer, of certain advancement to the individual by whom it was faithfully served. Achievements soon succeeded each other, not so much according to the ordinary calculation of numbers, or established rules derived from experience, as in apparent compliance with a controlling will. One head and one heart animated every movement. Triumph trod upon the heels of triumph, in positions and under circumstances that

were various in every thing, except a uniform disparity of forces, which was an element of glory ; and almost uniform predictions of disaster, that were doomed to disappointment.

In less than a year, a prodigious change had come over the nation's dream. The watchfires that burned on the fields of Mexico were signals for responsive civic fires, lighted by public sentiment on the top of every eminence, and blazing with inextinguishable brightness throughout the land. Here, on the spot, and almost within the walls where independence was proclaimed to an astonished world, one of the earliest demonstrations was made on the 10th of April, not many days after intelligence had arrived of the latest victory. It was speedily succeeded by a meeting in the Northern Liberties of the 15th ; in which a nomination was made without regard to party, and as on all subsequent occasions, without "the knowledge, wishes, or consent" of the individual whose name was soon inscribed upon a thousand banners. Experienced statesmen and wise lawgivers, the eloquent tongue and the learned mind, were superseded by the new-born fame of the unpretending soldier. Political parties vied with each other in efforts to be foremost in the race of preference. The voice that spoke was prompted, not by deliberate reflection, but by universal sympathy. An electric spark seemed to have

struck an expansive nerve in the whole body of the people, and awakened an excitement that was not to be controlled. No spirit of prophecy was required to foretell the inevitable result. A name known but recently, yet emblazoned with glory; a character new to the nation and the world, but written indelibly in the affections of both; a person that not one in ten thousand had ever seen, was to be placed at the head of the nation. No repugnance of his own, no long-cherished predilections among portions of the people for others, nothing could stay the onward course of excitement, gratitude, and pride, which swept, like a resistless torrent, sectional differences into one common mass, and left no choice except between the beaten track of an ordinary nomination by a party, and the novelty of one by acclamation among the citizens. Not a few were gratified at finding the utmost simplicity of deportment which they could fully appreciate, united to a moral dignity that was a mysterious object of wonder. Many were dazzled by the brilliancy of the first military exploits against a civilized nation that had been brought home to their patriotic feelings after a long course of peace. Some were willing to escape for a season from the trammels of party and to try an election that should be raised above its sphere. All felt a confidence, without reserve, in the charm which sterling honesty and unbending firmness would

fling around them, and hoped they would attract, as within a magic circle, every other virtue and all good men, to the assistance and support of a government resting upon a basis of tried integrity and popular will.

There was yet more in the enthusiasm that was so charged with prophecy. Every measure of the campaign was marked with the energy of the leader, by which the credit of it was made peculiarly his own. In carrying back his whole force from the river, except a well-judged sufficiency to garrison the strong bastioned field fort which had been thrown up, he justly believed the brigade left sufficient to maintain itself "against any Mexican odds." While that position must be held, the depot at Point Isabel, distant some eight and twenty miles, was threatened, and reinforcements were to be gathered there to strengthen his limited numbers. The popularity, and with it the success of the war, depended on the result of this enterprise. He wisely anticipated encounter on the way, and knowing the value of every man in the risk of being overwhelmed by numbers, he resolved to keep them all together. It was at this time that foreign journals, joining in the taunt of ungenerous criticism, proclaimed the contemptuous prediction that if he should venture to cross into Mexico, he would soon be driven back with nothing to cover his disgrace but

his ragged flag. Far different were the standards and trophies that floated over his return—standards of vanquished armies and captured citadels, trophies, not only of heroism and honor, but of justice, kindness, benevolence, and magnanimity.

Before the final departure from Point Isabel, where much disappointment was felt at the non-arrival of what was thought adequate additional force, the general was strongly urged by brave men yet longer to await its coming. Every argument was pressed upon him which prudence could suggest, in favor of avoiding the exposure of so small a body to greatly superior numbers, the extent of which was uncertain, but the reputation of which for discipline and efficiency, particularly in cavalry, was far from inconsiderable. He listened to a long discussion with patience and respect. Some one at length remarked to him that his only reliance was on the expected reinforcements. He promptly replied, "My reliance is on our bayonets—we will march to-morrow."\* A despatch of the 7th May accordingly announces that he should move that

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\* In the general order of 7th May, 1846, No. 58, is this phrase; "The commanding general has every confidence in his officers and men. If his orders and instructions are carried out, he has no doubt of the result, let the enemy meet him in what numbers he may. He wishes to enjoin upon the battalions of infantry that their main dependence must be in the bayonet."

day with the main body of the army, gladdened by the occasional sound of guns in the direction of Matamoras, "showing that every thing is right in that quarter." "If the enemy oppose my march," he proceeds to say, "in whatever force, I shall fight him." The enemy did oppose his march, and he fought him skilfully, with about one-third of his numbers. Neither the determination nor the act was prompted by any want of due respect for a gallant foe; while he was well aware of the personal superiority of his own soldiers. Whether a similar feeling of respect animated his antagonists may be judged by the fact that they had brought with them to the field five hundred women to be employed in pillaging and in stripping the dead. An impassable pond separated the combatants, and confined their efforts principally to a play of artillery. Night closed the combat, and the soldier slept upon his arms. As the general slumbered on the naked ground, moonlight his lamp, the centinel's tread his lullaby—he was awakened with an inquiry whether the teams should be harnessed. He answered, "the men have had a hard day's work—let them sleep;" and resting his head upon its cold pillow, and his limbs upon their "flinty and steel couch," he set them an example in the soundness of his slumbers, in which, upon all occasions, they were ready to confide as a proof of entire security, and to profit by it. At day-

break again a desire was expressed to him that they should fall back rather than face once more an enemy so numerous, now probably reinforced. After listening to the advice of a large council, he substituted his own judgment for that of the many, and took again the onward course to victory.\* In the orders of the 7th May, he had enjoined upon the battalions of infantry that their main dependence must be on the bayonet; and had given, as he said, to the light batteries a "fair chance" at Palo Alto. He now ordered a charge of cavalry and infantry soon after the armies became engaged, and brought into use every description of arms. They all emulated each other in skill and vigor, and rivalled each other in mutual support and contribution to success. He might well receive the applause addressed to the leader of the Grecian forces before the walls of Troy:—

"Great commander! Nerve and bone of Greece!  
Heart of our numbers: soul and only spirit  
In whom the tempers and the minds of all  
Should be shut up!"

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\* On the field of Resaca, when the battle was evidently won, the general remarked to an officer,—“Suppose I had taken the advice of those who did not wish me to advance, where would we be now? I knew this result would occur,” &c. “I was confident they could not bring an army to defeat the gallant little band I commanded.”

The confidence of the enemy, derived from skill and numerical strength, may be inferred from the condition of their commander's camp, which strangely contrasted with the simple arrangements of the American leader. His preparations, like those, indeed, of all of the nine generals who had rank and commands on the occasion, seemed as if formed for an excursion of pleasure rather than a field of battle. Papers, valuables, costly plate, all were there, as was thought, beyond the reach of danger. A captive general officer declared on the following day, that if he had had a treasure with him of any amount, he would have regarded it as safe as if it were in the city of Mexico.

Enterprises of all kinds are supposed to derive important influences from their outset and early occurrences. It has, therefore, been considered that the whole complexion of the Mexican war was imbued with the brilliant and with the sombre hues derived from its first battles. To the hosts of one nation they proved a pillar of light; to those of the other a cloud of darkness. They taught each to feel its relative capacity. They broke in pieces the talisman of confidence with which one party was armed, and they placed a charmed sword of victory in the hand of the other. They served to create a principle of faith, which is powerful in all things. In its infusion into armies it is strong enough to turn the flanks of moun-

tains. They served, too, in gloomy retrospect, as a pall of despondency, that hung upon the doomed fortunes of the vanquished. They taught both to disregard the ordinary estimates on which the fate of armies is supposed to rest. Numbers became neutralised as an item of calculation, and position was almost paralyzed as a basis of support. Defective resources grew into abundant supplies in the *bivouac* of the accustomed victors; while plentiful stores melted away, as measures of strength, in the strong fortress of those who believed that they were to be defeated. The word fail was struck from the vocabulary of the invading troops. If at any time they had been in reality, according to repeated threatenings, overwhelmed with numbers or cut to pieces, victory would scarcely had been recognized on standards to which it had become a stranger, or defeat acknowledged by those who believed it to be impossible. An imputed mastery, which went through the whole war, belongs to these early successes and the lasting feeling produced by them. It detracts nothing from the merits of that great captain who, with the certainty of science and the intuition of military genius, and in the full blaze of valor and renown, conducted another column over lofty ramparts and frowning battlements to the last great accomplishment of the lawful end of war. Each contributed his full measure to the mighty

work, and the trophies of the one were hailed by the other with patriotic pride, as attributes of his own unenvied glory.

Yet it cannot be disguised that the first victories were pledges of many more. Unbounded gratitude and praise are due to that daring and sagacious firmness, which, in unaided self-dependence, took at its flood the tide to fortune. On each of several occasions military men would have opposed, for they did oppose, what they believed to be a more than doubtful hazard; and if not triumphant, what the world would have condemned as full of rashness. These were occasions when the promptings of genius must prevail over the suggestions of prudence, even at a risk which less vigorous minds might shrink from, and reason in the abstract might condemn. Between the boldest measures and utter ruin, was the only choice. Reflect upon the consequences that must have arisen from an opposite determination, induced, as it might have been, on one occasion,—the most brilliant of them all—by advice as authentic, as it was believed by many to be sound. Had one drop less of heroic blood filled the swelling heart of the brave soldier, he would have fallen back, justified by rule and by councils of war, to his intrenchments. But his immortal name would have been forfeited; torrents of blood would have flowed in the valley of Mexico; hopes now

extinguished for ever would have aroused the whole population of the enemy to new exertions; and the proud flag which floats in honor upon every sea, would have become an object of loathing and scorn. Responsibility again and again fell upon him alone. Again and again it was fearlessly met and faithfully discharged, and a nation pays the well-earned tribute of its gratitude.

From the moment that flagrant war was about to put aside the uncertain condition in which the respective frontiers stood, and all that remained, was to carry it on effectually, the commanding general recommended, as he was prepared to exercise, the utmost vigor; and advised that the enemy's country should be made its theatre. A city of great strength, well fortified and full of troops, was the key to an extensive region, and it must be taken. A well established principle requires for the assailants, in such cases, a disparity of three to one. Monterey was attacked by not much more than half the number of its garrison. "It was believed by the Mexicans to be impregnable." It "had the reputation for the greatest strength of any town in the country." "Against small arms it was itself a fortification from one end to the other." Such is the language of an eye witness and a sharer in the exploit. He testifies, besides, that the general, after the close of the battle, when he had laid aside

his arms, "divided the little comforts he possessed among the wounded, and sent even the presents of fruit which he received from the inhabitants of the country, to be distributed at the hospitals." With like feelings he sent supplies of all kinds to the wounded and diseased Mexicans, abandoned by their own chief at Encarnacion.

A series of untoward circumstances about this time occurred, which were well calculated to try how far an equanimity that was proof against all the contingencies of battle, would stand the test of complaint and opposition, where nothing was expected but approbation and support. After a gallant defence, Monterey capitulated. Within the scope of instructions previously received, was the power, if occasion should require, holding out the hope of peace, to conclude an armistice.\* A favorable opportunity for the exercise of this power was here presented. A farther effusion of blood on both sides could be prevented. The principal loss of life must necessarily be sustained by troops who, while determined to succeed, were uncovered to fire from embrasures and parapets. The claims of humanity were heard amidst the shouts of

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\* General Scott's official letter, Washington, Head-quarters of the army, June 12, 1846. Repeated in a letter, dated "Head-quarters of the army, Washington, June 15, 1846."

victory. Feelings of gratitude would be excited in the bosoms of the conquered without abating a tittle of the advantages of success. Escape was practicable to those who were permitted to withdraw, and the possession of them as prisoners would have been embarrassing and burdensome. The just pride of the victors would be gratified by augmented glory reflected from an award of merit to their antagonists. It was no military necessity that induced liberal terms. To infuse some drops of conciliation into the bitter cup of disaster which they had been made to drink nearly to the dregs, was consistent with a policy which proposed to conquer peace. An armistice was therefore agreed to, of which the terms had been arranged by those who were most competent to judge. It did not meet with the concurrence of the department, and within eleven days of the time fixed for its close, it was declared inoperative.\*

Another check, not less keenly felt by the General, mingled with alleged interferences with his command, consisted of a sharp rebuke from the Government,

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\* The "orders" of 27th September are thus expressed: "Superior to us in numbers, strongly fortified, and with an immense preponderance of artillery, they have yet been driven from every point, until forced to sue for terms of capitulation. Such terms have been granted as were considered due to the gallant defence of the town, and to the liberal policy of our own Government."

growing out of the publication, by a military correspondent, of a private letter, not intended for the press. The characteristic answer given to this measure of disapproval must not be overlooked. It conveyed the frank acknowledgment of the writer that to any expression of disapprobation coming with the high authority of the President, he was bound, by duty and by respect for his high office, patiently to submit; but lest silence should be construed into a tacit admission of the grounds and conclusions set forth, he deemed it a duty to himself to speak plainly in reply. He did not admit that the letter was obnoxious to the objections that had been urged. He firmly maintained that, although since the capitulation of Monterey, the confidence of the department had been gradually withdrawn, and his own consideration and usefulness correspondingly diminished, he had sought faithfully to serve the country by carrying out the wishes and instructions of the executive. It was on this occasion that he used the phrase which has been often quoted: "I ask no favor, and I shrink from no responsibility." He concludes in terms of equal sternness: "While intrusted with the command in this quarter, I shall continue to devote all my energies to the public good, looking for my reward to the consciousness of pure motives and the final verdict of impartial history." Soon, too soon, did that reliance find its reward in the

trying hour which brought him again into communion with the high officer whose authority he had not disputed, who had paid the great debt of nature before him. Too soon has the appeal been adjudged by the final verdict of impartial history.

What he deemed the hardest duty of all, almost at the same time with these other perplexing difficulties, was to submit to the withdrawal of his troops. A small force had remained with him. Small as it was, it had shared with him in dangers and triumphs, and they were prepared to meet together for better and for worse the chances of future fortune. The essential part of this little army was unexpectedly removed to another quarter. To this, a sense of duty, still his guiding star, led to prompt obedience. But the consequences which the order was supposed to involve, of unaccustomed inactivity and forbearance from the field, he felt perfect freedom, without any breach of discipline, manfully to resist and effectually to counteract. It was the wish of the Government, and a believed necessity, and certainly a strongly expressed call from superior authority, short of absolute command, that he should abandon his advanced post, and make no detachments, except for immediate defence and limited purposes. A resistance to these inducements, grave as they were, could have arisen only from a deep sense of what was due to the honor and safety of the brave companions

who were still around him. He deemed it inglorious that they should seek shelter within the walls which they had so lately mastered, or abandon a whole region which they had made their own. He took upon himself, accordingly, all the responsibility for which he might be called to account—by the enemy, and he cheerfully prepared for the issue with them. Considering the continued occupancy of his position necessary, he declared his intention to hold it unless he should be positively ordered by the Government to fall back. How he met his responsibility to the enemy, speedily became matter of history; his own Government placed him under no restraint by positive orders; and the merit of his position was told in the fatal retreat of the repulsed Mexican army through leagues of arid desert, where “famine and the ague eat them up.”\*

If the General never forgot the honor and glory of

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\* A despatch, dated “Camp near Monterey, 21st April, 1847,” contains this sentence: “It is asserted by a person just arrived from San Luis, that not more than one-half of General Santa Anna’s original force was saved in the retreat after the battle of Buena Vista; and that his march is indicated by the dead strewed along the road for sixty leagues.”

On the 28th February, 1847, General Taylor had written from Saltillo, “Our troops hold the positions they have so well defended, and are prepared to receive the enemy should he venture another attack.”

his soldiers, they placed entire confidence in the valor and protection of their gallant chief. They knew that he was always ready to stand side by side with them in any extremity, to endure their hardships, to be satisfied with their fare, and never to abandon them in the hour of calamity ; and they were willing to die for him. It is not easy to say, exactly, what makes the charm of a beloved commander. Confidence in him is a magic spell which gives vigor to the arm and firmness to the heart. Each individual on the field, regardless, perhaps, of the precise plans that may have been laid down, or measures that may be impending, derives assurance that they are the best, from the coolness of their leader,

“ While his brow supports  
Undaunted valor and contempt of death,”

and from the recollection of his unvarying success. They may have heard, too, that the most renowned of all commanders teaches, in his remarkable Commentaries upon his own exploits, the lesson, “ quantum in bello, fortuna possit ;”<sup>\*</sup> and they readily believe that

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<sup>\*</sup> De Bello Gallico, Lib. 6 ; xxiii.

Again ; “ Fortuna, plurimum potest, præcipuè in Bello.” De Bello civili, Lib. 3, lvii.

Again : “ Multum, quàm in omnibus rebus, tum in re militari, potest fortuna.” De Bello Gallico. Lib. 6, xxviii.

they are fighting under banners favored by her smiles. All military men know the value of moral force, and they estimate it as three to one in comparison with the mere force of numbers. General Taylor gave it his full belief without the slightest dependence upon blind chance. He could not mistake the disposition to emulate his personal example : he knew the contagion that would spread from soul to soul, and he relied, not vainly, on his own tried spirit, to enkindle corresponding spirits all around him. He resembled the great Theban general in many points of character ; but he differed from him in this—that as Epaminondas was said to have conquered every thing but fortune, *his* lion heart was able to conquer fortune too. To her weak auguries he never turned an ear ; and he defied her frowns as much as he scorned to flatter man. There was not a taint of superstition in him. His good report even of his troops was eminently candid, and it was founded in what he believed to be the strictest justice. More than once, and in more than one war, he uttered censure at every hazard, and almost as freely as he uttered praise. In Florida he fearlessly denounced conduct that he deemed unworthy, at the imminent peril, not only of popularity, but of his commission, which was for a long time assailed. In Mexico he had the moral firmness to speak the truth of all, when the suggestion of it might have

been death to prospects the most bright that a citizen of the republic can enjoy. He was desirous of the good will and support of all good men; but he regarded neither popular nor executive favor, if either must be purchased by the omission of a duty. This vital spring of all his actions—this keen sense of duty, alacrity in its performance, and a stern purpose never to turn aside from it—marked every military despatch, and accompanied every daily march; and it found ready compliance with its promptings when great occasions called it into exercise. It appeared in strict subordination to command as long as command was given. It infused active exertion into every movement, and inspired intrepid boldness in preparing to obey the orders of the government, regardless of difficulties and dangers; and when the hour of battle came, nothing could stay its onward course;

“Not fate, allegiance, or the hand of Mars  
Threat’ning, with fiery truncheon, his retire.”

It was rapid as the summer lightning, and terrible as the winter storm.

Can enlgy dip its pencil in any richer colours? God forbid that greatness should be determined by the number of victims wantonly sacrificed to ambition, or by the depths in which selfishness has waded through blood! Were such the rule, a single for-

fortunate encounter, where rival monarchs have brought their battalions to the field, might confer immortality. In such a one, a ruthless conqueror boasted that he had made sixty thousand prisoners, taken sixty-five standards, three fortresses, and more than twenty generals. By the same measure of greatness, if disaster and defeat are of sufficient magnitude, they should make a hero. As when out of four hundred thousand soldiers who marched into the Russian territory, one thousand infantry and horsemen, under arms, returned at the end of five months, from those "pale and frozen deserts." Glory is not ascertained by the degree of fertility which the soil may have derived by being fattened by the bodies of the slain. Little do warriors know to what uses their wholesale butcheries may be applied. Millions of bushels of human bones, gathered from the plains of Leipsic, of Austerlitz and Waterloo, have been sent to England, and there ground to dust and sold, for manure. Let it be remembered that the most memorable military exploit on record, was the retreat of "the ten thousand." Our own annals contain nothing but the deeds of small bodies of men, from Bunker Hill to New Orleans.

Washington did not signalize himself on extensive fields, or at the head of great armies. His legions were not more numerous than those of General

Taylor. If any among ourselves, after more than half a century has given opportunity to place the true stamp upon his memory, are disposed to question his claims to greatness, let them listen to a tribute, of late years, paid to it by a foreign pen. After passing in review, the names of mighty men of ancient and of modern times, the author continues thus: "How grateful the relief which the friend of mankind, the lover of virtue, experiences, when turning from the contemplation of such a character, his eye rests upon the greatest man of our own, or of any age;—the only one upon whom an epithet so thoughtlessly lavished by men, to foster the crimes of their worst enemies, may be innocently and justly bestowed! In Washington, we truly behold a marvellous contrast to almost every one of the endowments and the vices which we have been contemplating, and which are so well fitted to excite a mingled admiration and sorrow, and abhorrence." "It will be the duty of the Historian and the Sage, in all ages, to omit no occasion of commemorating this illustrious man; and until time shall be no more, will a test of the progress which our race has made, in wisdom and virtue, be derived from the veneration paid to the immortal name of Washington."

This exalted praise is cited not to prove the merits of the Father of his Country, or the estimation in

which they are held abroad, or to add a leaf to the chaplet of the immediate object of our eulogy, by claiming for him additional titles of wisdom and virtue, because of his known estimate of the majestic qualities, which were his study and delight, and his deep veneration for that "immortal name." Let it serve as not unwelcome testimony of the value of true greatness, and of the sterling ingredients of which it is composed.

If he alone be great, who is at the head of myriads of armed men, then Xerxes was a hero, and Leonidas was none. Yet were the chronicler of human events to select from the whole field of history and tradition, one exploit that, above all others, stands forth in proof of greatness, shining with the gathered brightness of nearly five-and-twenty centuries, and hallowed by the universal applause of Pagan and Christian times, he would point to the conduct of the Spartan commander, at the straits of Thermopylæ. In the place selected for that memorable conflict, some resemblance is supposed to be found to the position taken by General Taylor, for his last battle in Mexico. Both were wisely chosen for the operations of a small body against disproportioned numbers. Both were occupied by men prepared to conquer or to die. Of the various features of resemblance between these two remarkable occasions, the

spots on which a heroic stand was made, are not, perhaps, the most striking. For certain purposes, the military positions were not dissimilar, and for all purposes, there was wisdom in the choice of each.\* Coincidences may be traced in some particulars, besides, that otherwise would stand unmated and alone on the broad surface of time. A farther comparison may not be without its interest. Vast numbers on the heroic side were not an ingredient in the glory of either combat. All of the Grecian troops under Leonidas, amounted to *five thousand two hundred*. According to one historian, they were but *four thousand*. Of these, the Spartan band, devoted victims to the sublime laws of Lacedæmon, consisted of *three hundred*. General Taylor, by more precise returns, carried with him into action, four thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine, officers and men. Of the hostile forces, Persian or Mexican, the numerical strength in the ancient battle, is described as much

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\* "I determined," says General Taylor in his letter to General G. W. Butler, March 2, 1847, "to occupy a strong position between two spurs of a mountain, with a narrow valley between them, where, at one point, the road is so narrow as to permit the passage of only *one wagon* at a time." Herodotus, *ἱστορίαι*, z. 337, describes the particular spot at Thermopylæ, in precisely corresponding terms; "ἐόντας ἀμαξίτος μόνος."

greater than in the modern ; but in a military view, both would be regarded, and were so proclaimed, as overwhelming.

When the Ephori of Sparta enquired of their patriotic commander, what object he had in view, he answered in the characteristic phrase of the American Captain—"our duty." His associates in military command, were for retiring from the strait and falling back upon the isthmus. Leonidas rejected their advice and advanced, as did our general, to what he justly regarded as a defensible position, with multiplied disadvantages to the enemy.

The Persian monarch, surrounded by his submissive millions, sent before the battle, a summons to the Spartan chief, for the surrender of his arms. "Come and take them," was the laconic answer. In like manner, the Mexican Dictator, as his troops rolled onward like a flood, with confidence and numbers, not lest assured, demanded a surrender at discretion, threatening to cut to pieces the little army that stood in his way. A reply, scarcely less laconic, declined acceding to the request.

Leonidas went to his post, prepared to die. General Taylor wrote, on the eve of the battle, "this may be the last communication you will receive from me." His determination was avowed, "to die rather than suffer the flag of his country to be disgraced,"—

“the chances being,” as he declared, “ten to one that he should not be a living man at the setting of the sun.”

Resemblances, such as these, in events which have occurred at periods remote from each other, once, probably, suggested a theory that has not been without its supporters, of a Platonic year. It was supposed that, after the lapse of thirty-six thousand years, stars and constellations, by revolving equinoxes, would re-assume the same places in the heavens; and in moral conformity to this phenomenon of nature, that after the same number of revolutions of the sun, the whole course of human events should be renewed, and men and things modified, perhaps, in names and places, should return to their first condition, and re-enact their earlier doings. It is certain that human nature is, at all times, so much the same, that causes and effects succeed in similar progression. Hence history is a mirror scarcely less reflective of the future than the past. Prediction finds in experience its most unerring guide; and the arrogance of Xerxes and the heroism of Leonidas, are reflected at Buena Vista, in the same crimson hue which dyed the soil at the pass of Thermopylæ. It was on that occasion that Dienecees immortalized himself, upon being told that the Barbarian arrows would obscure the light of the sun, by his remark, that it would be a

convenience, for they should then fight in the shade. General Taylor, in one of the engagements of the late war, was reminded, by a gallant attendant, that the bullets were flying so thickly about him, that it was proper he should change his place. "We will go nearer," said the General, "and they will pass over our heads." The difference consisted in this, that the one remark was made, no doubt, bravely, at a moment of entire security, and at a distance from the threatened event, and the other, when death was on the wing, in a thousand terrific forms, and the air seemed charged with its fatal messengers. It was at Buena Vista, that the same tongue, when the dying and disabled were conveyed to the rear, and untold foes, in front, were advancing under four-and-twenty generals, uttered, in answer to a bleeding, gallant friend—another ever memorable phrase—uttered it in no vain boast; but when the impending moment threatened an immediate practical fulfilment. "There are my wounded. I shall never pass them alive." It had become a duty then, to perish, and the willing victim placed himself upon the altar of his country.

Men are not gods. Although occasionally gifted with properties above the standard of their race, an estimate can be formed only by comparing them with one another. The active and warlike Mexican chief-

tain took various opportunities to express himself in language scarcely less sublime. In a proclamation of 27th of January, 1847, his motto is boldly given out,—“to conquer or to die.” An *oath* was registered *before the Eternal*, and prescribed to his followers, not to rest an instant until they should completely wipe away the vain-glorious foreigner. “No terms with him,” was the cry; “nothing for us but heroism and grandeur.” On another occasion he prepares for the public eye this self-immolating pledge;—“My duty is to sacrifice myself, and I well know how to fulfil it. Perhaps the American hosts may proudly tread the imperial city of Azteca. I will never witness such an opprobrium, for I am *determined, first, to die fighting.*” Yet the imperial city was trodden by invaders’ feet, and the foreigner remained triumphant on the soil;—and the Mexican chieftain lived more than once by flight, leaving behind him the lofty record of his valor and his duty, for the amusement of his pursuers.

It was among the peculiarities of General Taylor that his sayings were adapted to the occasion, and called forth by it. Always sententious, and sometimes sublime, they were never untimely or vain-glorious. Were they pledges or promises? They were sure to be redeemed. Were they retaliatory or defensive? They were precise, firm, and dignified. Were they solemn and self-sacrificing? They were exalted by

the sublimity of surrounding danger and impending death.

The greatness we are desirous of depicting was not the perfection of *strategic* skill, for it had been inured to warfare chiefly with a wild and savage foe, less disciplined and drilled, but not less subtle, wary, bold, and dangerous, than civilized enemies. It was not in the usual sense of the terms, a knowledge of the world, for it had been exercised among frontier settlements of hardy pioneers, or beyond their borders. It was, nevertheless, a knowledge that penetrated deeply into the characters of men. It knew, at once, whom to confide in, and whom to distrust, and it seldom found its confidence misplaced, or reliance for especial purpose or performance, disappointed. It was not profound science or elegant literature; for practical vigor, activity, and exposure, employment and duty, filled up the measure of its time. Yet all the official papers are marked with a combined phrase and spirit, they display language and thought together so well adapted to each other, so straight forward and so clear, that the despatches from the army of occupation, and they are extremely numerous, may be regarded as specimens of masterly style and composition, challenging a comparison with writings of any similar character. Not an idea or a word is omitted, or is superfluous. A reader perceives, at a glance, the

perfect sense, and never turns aside to criticise, or even to think of the terms in which it is conveyed. It is native eloquence, without the dress of ornament. Cæsar did not write with more precision, or Napoleon with more effect. Whatever estimate may be placed abroad or at home upon the exploits, or whatever may be the difficulty of discovering the share which their principal actor bore in them, all agree in the excellence of the descriptions, which reconcile transparent truth with studied reserve, and the boldest actions with unaffected diffidence.

The excellent person whom we delight to honor was distinguished for a forethought which did not permit surprise, and provided for contingencies of every occasion ; or, as the event proved, knew how to overcome them. He had a courage always on the alert, and always in the front of danger, yet never excited, and rarely without especial advantage. It served in battle to infuse confidence into the inexperienced, and inspire the disciplined with emulation. In camp, it was his practice to make his home in the most exposed place. Inquiry for head-quarters was answered by pointing to the advanced pickets. His kindness and good-will would have become a woman's heart, and he seemed ingeniously to seek excuses for their exercise. "Do not shoot the deserters," said he ; "the worst punishment you can inflict is to send them back

to the Mexican army.”\* A spirit so gifted with the grace of lowliness, that nothing honorable was deemed by it too humble, possessed, as his familiar acquaintances attest, for its peculiar attribute, hatred and scorn for every thing mean in men and actions. His justice was exact, except when it was warped, by benevolence, on the side of mercy. He indulged no prejudices, either against improvements in the art of which he was the practical expounder, or against individuals; and he never was accused of partiality towards corps or officers. He studied the comfort and advantage of all alike, giving always his most earnest care to the sick and wounded, whether of his own forces or of the enemy who fell into his hands. With the Mexicans, who dreaded his encounter in the field, he enjoyed, not only respect, but esteem and popularity.† He had a self-reliance that never faltered, either in promptness of action or accomplishment of purpose, and he forgot the praise that belonged to himself, or

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\* Throughout the campaign, no man under him paid, with life, the penalty of martial law, although there may have been such as deserved it.

† When some poor Ranchero would be brought before the General, on a march, expecting to be hung if he did not make important revelations about the enemy's forces, he would be astonished at the inquiry, “how many bushels of corn to the acre are raised in these parts?”

bestowed it upon others. A temperance in all things, that was almost apostolic, did not exclude the practice of a plain and unpretending hospitality. A little bower, formed of leaves, in front of the General's tent, for he never consented to avail himself of any less humble roof, was his hall of audience and the resort of his officers ; and his frugal table supplied to every guest a plate and cheerful welcome. He was a lover of peace for its own sake, as well as for the pursuits it brought along with it, while he had all the faculties which war requires, and passed his life in its associations. In a business conversation, not long before his death, he said, that during forty years of military duty, he had never disobeyed an order, and he carried almost to excess the expectation of implicit obedience to orders in all who were connected with the service.

This distinguished example instructs us what qualities are harmonious, since they have been happily united in his person. May we not believe that all true greatness is compatible with simplicity, amiableness, and modesty ? After the battle of Salamis the reward of victory was withheld from all competitors, because each of them, before the altar of Neptune, selfishly inscribed his own name as foremost among the deserving.

If external appearances are proofs, in addition to many internal marks of modesty, General Taylor was

the least ostentatious of men. He dispensed with escorts, guards, and sentinels, the usual attendants upon officers of his rank. He insisted rigidly upon points of discipline, but he desired to spare his men, who were always sufficiently occupied in laborious duty, the fatigue of reviews, show drills and parades, and he shrunk instinctively in his own person from mere ceremony. It may not be without interest in drawing this part of his portrait to remark, that he seldom wore uniform himself, or required it in others. For occasions that demanded articles of ceremonial dress, he was provided with them, and when respect for those he was to meet made it proper, he would put them on. In the routine of camp life, and on a march, his garb was the plainest in the army. Although he never affected to set an example in any thing, there was a corrective of all tendencies to excess among the young, and unreflecting, in his never-failing frugality, abstinence, economy, and moderation, as there was inducement to other virtues in his exposure, hardihood, endurance, patience, promptitude, and romantic valor.

These were innate qualities of a well-constructed nature. Artificial ones he rarely desired to cultivate. He would blush and turn the conversation when allusion was made to his own services. After the battles of the 8th and 9th of May, a delegation from the Legislature of Louisiana came to present him a vote

of thanks and a sword. A speech and some further demonstration were expected. The General waited in embarrassment for the unwelcome moment, and assured a friend, upon his honor, that he would prefer fighting the battles over, to going through with the ceremony.

If it be considered difficult to resemble, by any effort, some of the properties with which he was endowed by a bountiful nature, it might not be unwise, at least to adopt in practice, the universal principle of his actions. The course of duty, varied by individual circumstances, lies straight and plain before us all. An example, which invites every one to pursue it with unvarying zeal, may be imitated without presumption, and with faculties that are denied to none.

From an early period of the campaign, marks of official respect were extended, less fitting to his merits than to the habits of the republic. Thanks of Congress, medals, swords, and expressions of applause from state and municipal authorities, followed each other in quick and complimentary succession, together with promotion to the highest recognized military rank, at first by brevet, and afterwards by commission.

Before the month of October, 1847, although no formal peace was reached, the war was substantially ended. A series of victories in the march of one

column had been echoed by more numerous victories in the march of the other. After a course of brilliant triumphs at Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Contreras, San Antonio, Churubusco, the Molinos del Rey, Chapultepec, and the gates of Belen and San Cosme, the National Palace of Mexico had become the head-quarters of an American army. The last of opposing armies, "once so formidable in numbers, appointments, artillery, &c.," was represented in the despatch of the General-in-chief as "twenty odd thousand men, who have disbanded themselves in despair." Nothing else was left to them. The government itself was "without resources. No army, no arsenals, no magazines, and but little revenue, external or internal." Thirteen of their generals prisoners, of whom three had been Presidents; colors, standards, twenty thousand small arms, and immense stores of munitions of war, were in the hands of the conquerors!

It was more than doubtful whether the Mexican nation coveted any other peace. Its greatest security for property and life was gained from strangers and enemies. Both of the American Commanders had declined the suggestion of subsisting their armies on the people of the country, and they continued to pay the highest prices for every thing that was consumed. An authentic appeal, from citizens of high standing, at one time reached the city of Washington, entreating

that our troops might not be withdrawn, to leave the better inhabitants at the mercy of the disorderly.

Such was the condition of affairs when General Taylor asked and obtained "a respite from duty." It was given with a cheerful acknowledgment, by the department, "of the very arduous and distinguished services rendered in the important command assigned" to him; and as cheerfully did he offer to "receive orders for the field," if his services should be deemed necessary.

A warmer welcome waited his return—a welcome from the people. Formal nomination and triumphant election followed. He was called to the Supreme Executive Chair, by no mere party vote, and in the face of his own declared wishes. He resembled that heroic Emperor, who, accustomed to command and gifted for a ruler, reluctantly put on the purple, and warned the Roman citizens against their choice. Soon came a joyous inauguration, and all was hope. No want of harmony obscured the brightness of the auspicious day. If the foremost, in the spirit-stirring scene, was the laureled Victor, then first before the gaze of that delighted multitude, as he swore to defend the Constitution—the second was the chief magistrate whose term had closed, with a patriotic pride in the wisdom of our Institutions, ministering, gracefully, to the tranquil gladness of the ceremony.

A new career was now opened. Wisdom in council must succeed to vigour in arms—the field was exchanged for the cabinet. Yet the same virtues which had been conspicuous in one situation, were adapted in different degrees of relative prominence to the other. A self-dependence less absolute, upon the stores of experience and peculiar faculties of a single leading mind, would be the necessary result of a new position, and of infinite variety of subordinate detail. The constitution, too, while it leaves the weight of responsibility and the exercise of power with the Executive Head, looks to official assistance from separate departments, from whose incumbents, opinions may be required “upon any subject relating to the duties of their respective offices;” opinions, of course, designed, in greater or less extent for practical influence and utility. He would be unwise, with the largest personal experience, who should not be open to advice, thus sanctioned, when the fate of nations may hang upon the issue. How far the measures of the late administration originated with its controlling Chief Magistrate, none of us have a right to enquire. It was not his tendency to be affected by fear, and he was never known to shrink from responsibility. Time is too fresh and opinion too immature to permit, if it were in place, on this occasion, a critical

review of the public events of the sixteen fruitful months which preceded our lamented loss. The effect of such as were fulfilled, and the influence of those which had not reached their accomplishment, are rich proofs of wisdom, and love of country.

Searching enquiries were promptly directed into the condition of territorial possessions, recently acquired, and yet comparatively unknown. Information was collected, under the auspices of the Executive, for the use of any and all the departments of the government; and exact knowledge was sought concerning the somewhat novel and always intricate subject of titles to land. Needful assurances were given, to tranquilize an uncertain population, of the benefits of protection and civil government, and for frustrating schemes of alienation by fraud or force.

Commercial and political intelligence was sought in the heart of the provinces of a great maritime neighbour, with a view to their own and our navigation laws. A treaty of great importance was negotiated with the same power, putting aside threatened collision, securing, in the not distant future, facilities for a passage from ocean to ocean, and relieving a feeble nation.

Treaties were made with the Sandwich Islands, with New Grenada, with Peru and Mexico, Nicaragua, San Salvador, and Guatemala.

Special missions to Liberia and Hayti, were directed, and successfully pursued.

Every prudent effort was made to prevent a possible compromise of neutrality, which was threatened with more than one European sovereignty, by expeditions of armed citizens, or other hostile movements, not justified by friendly relations, good faith, or subsisting laws. At the same time, the dignity and honor of the country were vindicated in a proud example of security and protection afforded to all justly entitled to the privilege of treading the American soil.

Distant realms of the Eastern world were visited, with a view to extend commerce, cultivate friendly relations, enlarge the bounds of knowledge, and make known to barbarous and civilized nations the safety of the citizen under the ægis of his adventurous flag in the remotest regions of the globe.

A becoming effort for the relief of foreign enterprise among polar seas, the fate of which involved the maritime interests of the whole world, was not forgotten.

And that gallant nation which, awakened from the sleep of ages by the spirit of Liberty, that seemed to breathe over the face of Europe, made one noble effort to burst its chains asunder, and failed only when imperial powers combined to rivet them anew,

called forth the warmest sympathy. Preparations were formed to hail the auspicious era of freedom in that congenial clime, the moment it should become compatible with a rightful observance of neutrality. Heroism struggled in vain, and Hungary fell back into the arms of Despotism, and the desire and the movement to welcome another name among the free governments of the earth, were reluctantly withdrawn, only when all was over; when the resemblance became complete to the signal efforts and the signal failure of a neighboring people, half a century before, at whose downfall,

“ Hope, for a season, bade the world farewell,  
And Freedom shriek’d—as Kosciusko fell.”

Neither last nor least, in the many and wise attempts to promote the true glory and durable good of the Republic, was the approach to immediate and friendly intercourse with the republic of Switzerland. Overtures were for the first time made, and gratefully received and reciprocated; for close connection with that heroic race and historic land, on whose classic rocks and lofty mountains, the shade of TELL keeps watch over the liberties of his countrymen.

Such were some of the magnificent designs which filled the mind of the late President, while looking beyond the mere centre of the Union. His deepest

sensibilities were engaged in parental care over the immediate harmony and happiness of his own native land. Under these bright skies, alone, can an excess of all that gives zest to life, produce restlessness and discontent, from mere satiety. He was prepared, with all the vigor of a patriot heart, to put down disunion. His loyalty was to his country—its whole people—their sovereignty, and liberty, and laws. He knew no higher public duty, than firm resistance to encroachments on the nation's rights. He had read of strife and consequent calamity among disjointed members of the same political family;—he had laid to heart the wise lessons of the sublime farewell of Washington;—he had led a life of entire devotion to the Union—and that Union, in its purest interests, he was determined to maintain. To the last ebbing of his sands of life, he would have stood a bulwark against anarchy; and his heroic actions and uncontaminated thoughts were consecrated to the end, to duty, and his country.

“Though perils did

Abound, as thick as thought could make them, and  
 Appear in forms more horrid, yet his DUTY,—  
 As doth a rock against the chiding flood,—  
 Would the approach of the wild river break,  
 And stand unshaken.”

















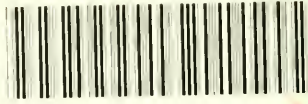








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